
Context and Comrades Illuminate a Silent Southerner: John Temple (1758–1838), Revolutionary War Pensioner

By Rachal Mills Lennon, CG

Descendants may incorrectly assume that ancestral actors on history's stage played generic roles. Pensioner John Temple's records were both few in number and doubtful in fact. Taking those records at face value left a skewed view of his military service and a decades-wide hole in his life story.

In Amherst County, Virginia, on a January day in the mid-1770s, teenager John Temple enlisted in the Continental Line's Sixth Virginia Regiment. In South Carolina four decades later an aging John Temple petitioned for a service pension based on financial hardship.¹ A factual void exists between those markers. The elderly man's sketchy chronicle conflicted with the Amherst soldier's military records. Could the contradictions be resolved?

THE PROBLEM

John's pension file focuses on issues arising from his final move from South Carolina to Alabama. His initial affidavit gives a few details:

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1. *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files*, microfilm publication M804, 2670 rolls (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1974), roll 2396, John Temple pension file S38431. For other records relating to this pension, see *Ledgers of Payments, 1818–1872, to U.S. Pensioners under Acts of 1818 through 1858 from the Records of the Office of the Third Auditor of the Treasury*, microfilm publication T718, 23 rolls (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Administration [NARA], n.d.), roll 2, vol. B, "Revolutionary War Pensioners Under Act of 1818, 1818–32," p. 358, for South Carolina: John Temple, \$8 monthly, paid from 23 July 1818 to March 1830; and vol. E, "Revolutionary War Pensioners Under Acts of 1818 and 1832, 1833–49," p. 123, for Alabama: "John Temple" \$8 monthly, paid from March 1833 through March 1838. Also, "Final Payment Vouchers Index for Military Pensions, 1818–1864," database, *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com>). No imaged final payment index card for John Temple of Alabama is found. Also, Alycon Trubey Pierce, *Selected Final Pension Payment Vouchers: Alabama, 1818–1864* (Lovettsville, Va.: Willow Bend, 1997), 72, abstracts an unfiled 1837 document where John requested an alteration of his pension payment.

23 July 1818 Edgefield District, South Carolina

John Temple aged sixty years, attests that he enlisted at Amherst Courthouse in the state of Virginia in the rifle company commanded by Captain Samuel Jordan Cavell or Cabell of the 6th Regiment Virginia infantry shortly after the battle of Bunker Hill and that he continued to serve in the said corps or in the service of the United States for six years and six months and that he was in garrison six months & until the peace concluded[;] he was discharged from service at Middlebrook state of New Jersey, where he had lost his eyesight . . . that he was in the battles of Amboy, Piscatagua & Brandy-wine, Trenton, at the taking of Burgoyne at Still Water &c. Signed John (x) Temple.²

As with many personal accounts, this one raised no flags until viewed in context. Conflicts exist about his enlistment date, length of service, discharge date, and claimed battles. At least partially blind, John did not write the statement, but he signed it with a mark. Did he or the recorder generalize his service term? Reviews of the other file documents, Virginia troop formations, and unit assignments clarify the contradiction, but attempts at resolution raised broader questions. How can one seemingly reliable statement be judged less accurate than another?

THE METHODOLOGY

Documenting a soldier's activities requires a broad context. Unit and military histories can supply details even without mentioning the soldier. A three-stage research plan can be productive.

1. *Examine historical context.* When and why was the soldier's company formed? Did it consolidate with others? Under what conditions did it serve? When and where did it engage?
2. *Test pension statements against historical records.* What proof did the veteran give for enlistment and discharge? Was his unit in the battles he claimed? If not, did he transfer to a different unit? Was his disability compatible with conditions under which his unit served?
3. *Research his associates.* Do their records shed light on the war-related questions? Did they associate with him post-war, perhaps revealing his identity across the forty years from his enlistment to his pension claim?

PHASE ONE: HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Revolutionary War lasted six years and six months, from the April 1775 volleys at Lexington and Concord to Cornwallis's October 1781 Yorktown surrender. John Temple's affidavit claims six years and six months of service, joining "shortly" after the 17 June 1775 Battle of Bunker Hill. Other evidence is needed to support the claim.

2. Application for pension, 23 July 1818, John Temple pension file S38431; digital image, Fold3 (<http://www.fold3.com/image/19582588>).

1775

The American Army originated in mid-June 1775. Commander-in-chief George Washington was charged with transforming new troops into a cohesive fighting force, assisted by state militias and independent companies when necessary.³ The state lines amassed at Massachusetts that summer. Key to Washington's new forces were Daniel Morgan and Hugh Stephenson's Virginians, whose rough dress and behavior were oddities to the northerners—as were their custom rifles, tomahawks, and “scalping knives.” Though many were “painted like Indians” their skill and courage were exactly what Washington needed.⁴

1776

In January 1776, Congress called for more troops to replace expiring enlistments and chronic desertions. Virginia approved four more regiments. Amherst County—where John enlisted—furnished sixty-eight “expert riflemen.” Officers included Captain Samuel Jordan Cabell (whom the pensioner mentioned) and 2nd Lt. Benjamin Taliaferro (who would play a continuing role in John's life).⁵ Assigned to the Sixth Regiment of the Virginia Line, they were stationed in Williamsburg for training and in September they received orders to New Jersey.⁶

The 1776 New Jersey and New York campaigns went poorly. As winter approached, Washington was losing the war, his army, and his reputation. Arguably saving the Revolution, the Continentals crossed the Delaware River,

3. Worthington C. Ford, ed., *Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789*, 34 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1904–37), 2:49–53. For the structure and operations of the Continental Army, see Robert K. Wright Jr., *The Continental Army* (Washington: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1983).

4. Millard Kessler Bushong, *A History of Jefferson County, West Virginia, 1719–1940* (Charles Town, W. Va.: Jefferson Publishing, 1941), 27–30.

5. For the ordinances, see William Waller Hening, *Hening's Statutes at Large*, 13 vols. (Richmond, Va.: George Cochran, 1821), 9:76–81. Captains were to recruit twenty-eight men; the first lieutenant, twenty-one; the second lieutenant, sixteen; and the ensign, nine. Officers who did not fill their quota by the end of February risked losing their commissions. For Cabell, see “Cabell, Samuel Jordan (1756–1818),” Library of Congress, *Biographical Directory of the United States Congress* (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=C000005>). Also, note 1, “General Orders, March 29, 1778,” digital image, University of Virginia Library, *The Papers of George Washington: Digital Edition* (<http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders>), citing *Revolutionary War Series* (16 June 1775–14 January 1779), vol. 14 (1 March 1778–30 April 1778). For Taliaferro, see Carol Ebel, “Benjamin Taliaferro (1750–1821),” *The New Georgia Encyclopedia* (<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/history-archaeology/benjamin-taliaferro-1750-1821>).

6. For a summary of the company's formation and first months, see Lenora Higginbotham Sweeny, *Amherst County, Virginia, in the Revolution, Including Extracts from the “Lost Order Book,” 1773–1782* (1951; reprint, Greenville, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1998). Most pensioners later described being in Williamsburg and marching north. See, for example, *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files*, roll 151, application of Marcy Barnett, widow's pension application W391 for service of James Barnett; and roll 2205, application of Augustine Smith, pension S19466.

defeated Hessian mercenaries at Trenton on Christmas Day, and won again at Princeton. After the 1776 campaign Howe controlled only New York, some New Jersey outposts, and dispersed detachments.

Washington retreated to Morristown, New Jersey, to strategize.⁷ Holding his exhausted, sick, and starving forces together, he issued a new call for Southern reinforcements. More Virginians responded.

1777

In the third year of conflict, General Howe's plan—for Burgoyne to invade New York while Howe assaulted the American capital at Philadelphia—misfired.⁸ The Sixth Virginia participated in the 1777 campaign. Early that year Morgan raised the Eleventh Virginia infantry regiment, and led it north to stop the “cruel...invaders” massing in New Jersey. As Howe tried to force one final battle, Washington hoped Morgan's new sharpshooters would slow enemy progress.⁹

Morgan and 180 frontiersmen arrived in New Jersey in early April. He took command of the new Provisional Rifle Corps—five hundred of the best marksmen from the Virginia, Maryland, and Pennsylvania lines, including the Seventh Company of the Sixth Virginia, in which John Temple claimed he served.

Morgan was to “dress the true Woods Men in the right Indian Style and let them make the Attack accompanied with screaming and yelling as the Indians do, [because] it would have very good consequences.”¹⁰ His forces vigorously harassed Howe's Redcoats. By September in New York, Morgan's men earned fame at Saratoga. They returned to Washington's headquarters in mid-November to winter at Valley Forge. They were discharged from Morgan the following May 1778.¹¹

7. For an overview of these battles, see Glen Valis, *New Jersey During the Revolution* (<http://www.doublegv.com/ggv/>).

8. See Rick Brainard, “The British Strategy of the 1777 Campaign Season,” *18th Century History* (<http://www.history1700s.com/index.php/articles/10-american-revolution/158-the-british-strategy-of-the-1777-campaign-season.html>).

9. For Morgan, see James Graham, *The Life of General Daniel Morgan of the Virginia Line of the Army of the United States with Portions of His Correspondence, Compiled from Authentic Sources* (New York: Derby and Jackson, 1858), particularly 121–22 for the quotation. Also, Don Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman* (Chapel Hill: University of N.C. Press, 1979).

10. “To Colonel Daniel Morgan, Head Quarters, Middle Brook, June 13, 1777,” transcription, *George Washington Resources: Washington Resources at the University of Virginia Library* (<http://etext.virginia.edu/washington/fitzpatrick/>), digital transcription from John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799*, 39 vols. (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Congress, 1933), vol. 8, no page number.

11. For a discussion of Morgan during the Saratoga Campaign, see Higginbotham, *Daniel Morgan: Revolutionary Rifleman*, 56–77.

PHASE TWO: TESTING THE ASSERTIONS

Against this backdrop consider John's statements. Three inconsistencies warrant attention: enlistment, service, and engagement.

ENLISTMENT

John did not date his enlistment, stating only that he joined "shortly after the battle of Bunker Hill." The battle occurred on 17 June 1775. Cabell's company and the Sixth Regiment were not created until seven months later. The discrepancy may stem from failing memory or John's definition of "shortly." Either way, the disparities call for clarity.

The earliest event on John's compiled military service cards is a "Company Pay Roll" dated "May 1777." Pay commenced "17 January" of an unstated year. So John was paid in May 1777 for service beginning 17 January 1777. It gives no enlistment date,¹² but three clues emerge.

- The payroll, taken at the end of May 1777, dates his enlistment to no later than mid-January of the same year (1777).
- The compiled service card that abstracts details from this payroll, as well as the payroll itself, state that John "furnished himself from 17 Jany 7 Mch." Thus, John provided essentials that the Continental Army furnished new recruits. The day and month John began furnishing himself indicates when his "Time of Service" began. Because the reimbursement note was only recorded on the May 1777 payroll it implies that John enlisted and began furnishing himself on 17 January 1777.
- Two other privates, Joseph Staples and Daniel Conner, appear on the May payroll with the same 17 January start date and notes that they furnished themselves for the same 17 January to 7 March period. Nothing further was found for Conner's enlistment. Staples's certification of service, signed by Cabell in 1784, states: "I do hereby certify that Joseph Staples enlisted as a soldier in my comp^y of riflemen the 17th Jan^y 1777"¹³

This indicates John enlisted one year and seven months after Bunker Hill. Not an original member of his regiment, he—like Staples and Conner—likely answered Washington's 1776–77 winter call for Southern fighters.

12. *Compiled Service Records of Soldiers Who Served in the American Army during the American Revolution*, microfilm M881, 1096 rolls (Washington, D.C.: National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1976), roll 103, John Temples (Pvt., 6th Regt., Va. Line, Rev. War) and John Temples (Pvt., Morgan's Rifle Regiment, Cont. Troops, Rev. War). For a digital image, see *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com/image/22834400>). John's records are divided between the two units. Also, *Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775–1783*, microfilm M246, 138 rolls (Washington, D.C.: NARA, 1980), roll 103, "Pay Roll of Capt. Samuel Jordan Cabell's Company in the sixth Battalion of Continental Troops, Commanded by Col. James Hendricks for the Month of May 1777"; digital image, *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com/image/9563139>).

13. Virginia Land Office, Military Certificates, 1782–1876, box 178, folder 9; Library of Virginia (LVA), Richmond.

LENGTH OF SERVICE

Only John's statement, written about forty years later by someone else, says he served six and a half years. If he joined in January 1777, that would mean he served until about July 1783—twenty-one months after the war ended. John said he was in garrison for six months and until the peace concluded. But John's former commanding officer Samuel Cabell provided evidence that John was discharged the year he enlisted.

In 1818 John claimed he had left his discharge "in the board of war at Richmond Virginia."¹⁴ He used a certification of service rather than a "discharge," to get bounty land for Continental service. Cabell explicitly stated John's enlistment and discharge dates:

I do hereby certify that John Temple enlisted as a Soldier in my Company of Rifle men the 17 day of Jan^y 1777 for three years & was discharged the 6th day of Sept^r following for Inability occasion'd by violent sickness which in a great Measure deprived him of his Eye sight[.] Given under my hand this 3rd of March 1784. Sam J. Cabell L. Col.¹⁵

This confirms the enlistment but challenges John's statement about his service. Cabell's document leaves John about six weeks shy of the nine months required by the 1818 pension act under which he applied.¹⁶

If the colonel and the blinded private intentionally provided false information, they were not alone. Veterans inflated service and overstated poverty to gain benefits. After the 1818 act veterans in financial straits who served as little as nine months were eligible. Rampant fraud caused Congress to amend the act two years later.¹⁷

That John could inflate his service does not mean he did. John's 1818 affidavit says he was discharged at Middlebrook, New Jersey, about twenty miles south of Morristown, where the troops wintered. They left in July for the Philadelphia and New York campaigns.¹⁸ John's company went with Daniel Morgan to engage Burgoyne in New York. If John was discharged in September 1777, it was unlikely at Middlebrook.

14. Application for pension, 23 July 1818, John Temple Revolutionary War pension file S38431.

15. "Revolutionary War Bounty Warrants," database with images, Library of Virginia, *Virginia Memory* (<http://www.virginiamemory.com/>), John Temple index entry, for digital image of Sam^l J. Cabell, voucher, 3 March 1784.

16. For more on the act of 3 March 1818 (3 Stat. 410), see William Henry Glasson, *History of Military Pension Legislation in the United States* (New York: Columbia University, 1900), 33–38.

17. *Ibid.*, 38–39.

18. "Washington's Revolutionary War Itinerary and the Location of His Headquarters, 1775–1783"; digital images, University of Virginia Library, *The Papers of George Washington* (<http://archive-edu.com/page/694441/2012-11-19/http://gwpapers.virginia.edu/documents/revolution/itinerary/all.html>).

John's pension application omits creditable service in his July 1777 detachment to Morgan's elite rifle corps. A payroll shows him in Cabell's "Company of the Riffle Detachment Commanded by Col^o Daniel Morgan, for Three Months from the 1st of August to the 1st of November 1777." John received a private's full pay: \$6 2/3 per month, totaling \$20. Only those who died during that pay period received less. Had John been discharged in September, he should not have received full pay.¹⁹

The final document regarding John's length of service was created three months after Cabell's certification. On 23 June 1784 Virginia issued John a warrant for one hundred acres of bounty land based on three years of service in the Continental Army, not the militia.²⁰

At this point, three seemingly reliable official documents conflict:

- Certification of discharge attests seven and a half months of service
- Colonel Morgan's payroll attests nine and a half months service
- The bounty-land award attests minimum of three years of service

Other records relate to John's service term. In mid-May 1778 the Virginia House of Delegates considered John Temple's petition asking "compensation for loss of eye in Continental Service." On 29 May the Committee of Public Claims recommended thirty pounds for his "present relief"; the Senate agreed the next day. John's petition does not survive and the published account does not detail his service, discharge, or disability.²¹ A related record, however, partially offsets the loss:

20 May 1778 Williamsburg, Virginia

House of Delegates. Presented and read the "petition of John Temple setting forth, that while a soldier in the 6th Virginia regiment, he lost the sight of one of his eyes, and was thereby rendered incapable of subsisting by means of his own industry."²²

19. *Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775–1783*, roll 133, for "Pay Roll of Capt Samuel Jordan Cabells Company of the Riffle Detachment commanded by Colo Daniel Morgan for Three Months from the 1st of August to the 1st of November 1777"; digital images, *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com/image/9688147/> and <http://www.fold3.com/image/9688159/>).

20. "Virginia State Land Office, Military Certificates, 1782–1876," LVA Military Certificates microfilm roll Sto–Ter, certificate number 3298; orig. box 186; LVA. For the qualifications, see "About the Revolutionary War Land Office Military Certificates," *Library of Virginia* (<http://www.lva.virginia.gov/public/guides/opac/lomcabout.htm>).

21. Randolph W. Church, *Virginia Legislative Petitions, 1776–1782* (Richmond: Virginia State Library, 1984), 181. The petition does not appear in the Library of Virginia's database, and Church notes he could not find it.

22. *Journal of the House of Delegates of the Commonwealth of Virginia, Begun and Held at the Capitol in the City of Williamsburg, on Monday the Fifth Day of May, in the Year of Our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Seven* (Richmond, Va.: Thomas W. White, 1827), 14. Also, *ibid.*, 29 May 1778, p. 27, indicates Temple served in Capt. Cabell's company of infantry and recommends £30 be awarded for "his present relief."

The legislative process was slow. It took months to create an affidavit with documentation, get it to the petitioner's representative in Williamsburg, and have it read to the House. The time between John's last appearance on the New Jersey-based pay roll of Daniel Morgan's Rifle Company in November 1777 and the end of his long trek home is compatible with the House of Delegates' action date.

Normally Morgan's payroll, created when troops' pay came due, would be more reliable than Cabell's certificate created seven years later. Nevertheless, the extra two months the payroll attributes to John falls far short of the three years needed to receive bounty land. If he was not with his original company, how did he accumulate the additional time?

DISABILITY

Descriptions of John's disability vary: "lost his eyesight"; "violent sickness which in a great Measure deprived him of his Eye sight;" "loss of an eye"; and "lost the sight in one of his eyes."²³ When and how did it occur and did it end his service? The answers are critical.

Reference to a "violent sickness" in his discharge papers suggests that illness or infection—not injury—caused the damage. Information about the Continental Army's camp conditions sheds light on the matter.

FIELD CONDITIONS

Washington worried deeply about his men's health. An army too sick to fight would lose. Disease and illness claimed ten times more soldiers than battle. During John's service a third or more of the army was likely to be sick or unfit for duty at any time.²⁴

Exposure, fatigue, and malnutrition were constants, as were overcrowding, poor sanitation and hygiene, contaminated food and water, and disease. Trained doctors and nurses were scarce. Near-nakedness and blanket shortages fostered illnesses when men slept on the ground.²⁵ A diet of "animal food, untempered by Vegetables, or Vinegar, or by any kind of Drink, but Water and eating indifferent

23. Application for pension, 23 July 1818, John Temple Revolutionary pension file S38431. Also, Church, *Virginia Legislative Petitions, 1776–1782*, 181.

24. John T. Greenwood and F. Clifton Berry, *Medics at War: Military Medicine from Colonial Times to the Twenty-First Century* (Annapolis, Md.: Naval Institute Press, 2005), 1815. Also, Ann M. Becker, "Smallpox in Washington's Army: Strategic Implications of the Disease during the American Revolutionary War," *Journal of Military History* 68 (April 2004): 393, citing Charles H. Lesser, ed., *The Sinews of Independence: Monthly Strength Reports of the Continental Army* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), xxx–xxxii.

25. David L. Cowen, *Medicine in Revolutionary New Jersey* (Trenton: New Jersey Historical Commission, 1975), 13. For a detailed essay on the hospital system, see Erna Risch, "The Hospital Department," *Supplying Washington's Army* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, 1981), 374–414.

Bread,” was blamed for “putrid diseases” ravaging the army.²⁶ Despite efforts to improve diet, clothing, and hygiene, health issues remained major killers.

When young John arrived at winter quarters in Morristown in early 1777, his youth and origin increased the odds against him. Dr. Benjamin Rush, the first Director General of the Medical Department, noted that:

Young men under 20 years of age were subject to the greatest number of camp diseases. . . . The Southern troops were more sickly than the northern or eastern troops [and] sicken from the want of salt provisions. Their strength and spirits were restored only by means of salted meat.²⁷

The Continental Congress Medical Committee noted the particular difficulties facing Southern recruits in a February 1777 letter to Washington—when John was likely en route to Washington’s camp:

Some Battalions from Virginia are now on their march to Join you, and are ordered to take the upper route, in order to avoid Philadelphia where the [smallpox] Infection now prevails. . . . the Southern Troops are greatly Alarmed at the Small Pox, [as it] very often proves fatal to them in the Natural way.²⁸

JOHN’S HOSPITALIZATION AT MENDHAM

Those conditions landed John at the Mendham regimental hospital soon after he arrived in New Jersey.²⁹ It was housed in the Hilltop Church, a small, old wooden structure about eight miles from Morristown.³⁰

Although records give no cause for John’s hospitalization, inferences are possible. In 1777 smallpox, dysentery, and “fevers” roiled army camps and hospitals.³¹ Perhaps sickness, hospitalization, and blindness occurred in

26. Charles Knowles Bolton, *The Private Soldier Under Washington* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1902), 50.

27. Louis C. Duncan, *Medical Men in the American Revolution, 1775–1783* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Medical Field Service School, 1931), 241.

28. “To George Washington From the Continental Congress Medical Committee,” 13 February 1777, *Papers of George Washington: Digital Edition* (<http://rotunda.upress.virginia.edu/founders/GEWN-03-08-02-0349>), citing *Revolutionary War Series*, vol. 8. Also, Mary C. Gillett, *The Army Medical Department, 1775–1818* (Washington: Govt. Printing Office, 1982), 78.

29. “Company Muster Roll,” 6th Va., Cabell’s Co., 4 August 1777, noting John Temple at Mendham in “May and June” 1777; *Compiled Service Records of Soldiers*, roll 103, John Temples; digital image, *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com/image/22834402/>).

30. S. B. Axtell, *History of Morris County, New Jersey, with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Prominent Citizens and Pioneers* (New York: W. W. Munsell, 1882), 247; digital images, *OpenLibrary.org* (<https://archive.org/stream/cu31924028828386#page/n311/mode/2up>).

31. Numerous published monographs discuss the impact of disease on soldiers. See, for example, Oscar Reiss, *Medicine and the American Revolution: How Diseases and Their Treatments Affected the Colonial Army* (Jefferson, N.C.: McFarland, 2004). Also, Gillett, *The Army Medical Department, 1775–1818*.

sequence. However, if John lost his sight during his May–June hospitalization, he could not have been a rifleman through November. Morgan needed crack marksmen; poor vision would have serious consequences for the soldier, the unit, and the mission. Unless John’s vision slowly deteriorated, he likely did not lose his eyesight at Mendham but from a second serious illness during a later assignment.

THE PERIOD OF JOHN’S DISCHARGE

From June until November 1777 Morgan’s Rifles were deployed in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and New York. Apparently John’s Seventh Company was detached to them in late July—after his release from Mendham—and mustered in on 4 August.³² The unit is said to have fought the fiercest part of the battle and suffered high casualties in assaults against Howe and Burgoyne in New York. Battle worn, they were ordered back to headquarters in White Marsh, Pennsylvania, where pitiful remnants of John’s unit arrived two weeks later. In frigid weather and amid “much sickness” they also lacked clothing, shoes, blankets, and food. Washington wrote four days later that “there are not more than one hundred and Seventy of Morgan’s Corps fit to march.”³³

John’s “violent sickness” and sight loss seem to fall within this time frame. Payrolls show he did not continue with Morgan after 1 November. While Morgan returned to headquarters, sick and wounded survivors of the fight against Burgoyne—9 September through 7 October—presumably were left somewhere. The most likely place for medical care was Albany, New York. The August–November Cabell company payroll (which includes John) notes that in late October five men died, three in the hospital at Albany—the only hospital named. Other casualties were battle related and from September.³⁴ The roll did not name the sick.

32. *Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775–1783*, roll 133, for “Pay Roll of Capt Samuel Jordan Cabells Company of the Riffle Detachment commanded by Colo Daniel Morgan . . . from the 1st of August to the 1st of November 1777.”

33. Graham, *Life of Daniel Morgan*, 179. Also, University of Virginia Library, “Washington to Gen. Nathanael Green,” 22 Nov. 1777, Whitemarsh, *Internet Archive Wayback Machine* (<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/WasFi10.html>), citing John C. Fitzpatrick, ed., *The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799*, vol. 10.

34. *Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775–1783*, roll 133, for “Pay Roll of Capt Samuel Jordan Cabells Company of the Riffle Detachment commanded by Colo Daniel Morgan . . . from the 1st of August to the 1st of November 1777.” At the Albany hospital Thomas Bushel died on 16 October, John Bell on 20 October, and John Tyree on 21 October. The other two deaths occurred in September, one at the Battle of Brandywine.

HOSPITALIZATION AT ALBANY

On 24 October 1777 Dr. James Thacher wrote that the Albany hospital was filled with both soldiers and officers from the battlefield:

Not less than one thousand wounded and sick are now in this city; the Dutch church, and several private houses, are occupied as hospitals. . . . [the men are] miserable objects, languishing under afflicting diseases of every description.³⁵

The strain on the hospital staff and system was unsustainable. Many men were just sent back to their unit while others were furloughed before mid-November.³⁶

This supports the payroll evidence of John's discharge in November 1777. His blindness occurred during the post-Saratoga march to headquarters. He could have made it to White Marsh for discharge there, but more likely he stayed at Albany with the sick and wounded.

Regardless, service through November 1777 was insufficient for bounty land—short by two years, two months, and two weeks, and short of his stated service by four and a half years. Might he have served after leaving Morgan's corps, despite blindness?

THE INVALID CORPS

Colonel Lewis Nicola was Philadelphia's barracks master and town major in 1776 when he devised a plan to defend the city. He raised a body of men unable to perform regular duty but able to patrol the streets and guard the magazine. Congress sanctioned the regiment in June 1777, authorizing eight companies. Each had a hundred wounded privates incapable of field duty.³⁷ Physicians determined fitness for this duty, transferring the unfit to the invalids' unit. They were not discharged.³⁸

35. James Thacher, *Military Journal of the American Revolution: From the Commencement to the Disbanding of the American Army* (Hartford, Conn.: Hurlbut, Williams, 1862), 112.

36. Gillett, *Army Medical Department, 1775–1818*, 97.

37. Thomas Lynch Montgomery, ed., *Pennsylvania Archives*, 5th ser., 8 vols. (Harrisburg, Pa.: State Printer, 1906), 4:5.

38. *Ibid.*, 4:4. Also, John B. Linn and William H. Egle, eds., *Pennsylvania Archives*, 2nd ser., 19 vols. (Harrisburg, Pa.: E. K. Meyers, 1890), 11:271. For a history of the Corps, see Robert F. Haggard, "The Nicola Affair; Lewis Nicola, George Washington and American Military Discontent during the Revolutionary War," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 146 (June 2002): 149, citing "General Orders," 6 August 1777, George Washington Papers, Library of Congress.

John Temple seems an ideal candidate for the Invalid Corps, but he is not on its known pay and muster rolls.³⁹ Vast record losses mean he could have served without leaving proof. However, none of the fifty-nine Virginians on the extant rolls were in his company or regiment. Without additional evidence, no assumption of service is warranted. Evidence suggests, instead, that he and Captain Cabell simply stated that he enlisted for three years and served for six to secure his bounty land.

CLAIMED BATTLES

John claimed service in five battles and mentioned others: “Amboy, Piscatagua & Brandywine, Trenton, at the taking of Burgoyne at Still Water &c.” Amboy and Piscatagua fall within John’s documented service. Issues arise with Trenton and Brandywine claims. Trenton was three weeks before John enlisted and about two months before he arrived in New Jersey. Brandywine was five days after his alleged 9 September discharge but before his appearance on the November payroll.

Even if John was discharged in November, he likely did not serve in that battle with the Sixth Virginia. The 1777 campaign was a two-pronged approach. Washington’s army was engaged at Brandywine with the Sixth Regiment. John, however, was with Morgan’s Rifles in New York battling Burgoyne. Once again, historical evidence challenges the pensioner’s assertions.

SUMMARY

Elderly John Temple’s recollections were spotty. His pension affidavit appears to hit the highlights, blur the details, and recall little about commanders at

39. Both Nicola’s and Morgan’s corps wintered at Valley Forge in 1777–78. For a modern compilation of the men known to have been there with Washington, see “The Muster Roll Project,” *Valley Forge Legacy* (<http://valleyforgemusterroll.org/index.asp>). For individual rolls, see Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media and George Mason University, *Papers of the War Department: 1784–1800*, database with digital images (<http://www.wardepartmentpapers.org>). Also, Lewis Nicola (at Ft. Mifflin, 10 June 1777), “Report on Troops at Philadelphia,” *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress* (<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw4/042/0200/0273.jpg>). Also, Nicola, “List of Philadelphia Officers,” 25 July 1778, *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress* (<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw4/051/0000/0056.jpg>). Also, Nicola, “Return on Detachment,” 9 August 1781, *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress* (<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw4/080/0200/0245.jpg>). Also, Nicola, “Invalid Regiment,” 23 December 1781, *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress* (<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw4/082/0600/0640.jpg>). Also, Lewis Nicola, “Return on Invalid Regiment Discharged,” 10 July 1783, *George Washington Papers at the Library of Congress* (<http://memory.loc.gov/mss/mgw/mgw4/092/0600/0629.jpg>). Also, abstract of Joseph Howell to A. W. Dunscomb, “Return of sundry men of the Invalids unit,” 10 June 1785, *Papers of the War Department: 1784–1800* (<http://wardepartmentpapers.org/document.php?id=948>). Also, *Revolutionary War Rolls, 1775–1783*, roll 132, for “Invalid Corps (1780–81);” digital images, *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com/image/9955125/>), <http://www.fold3.com/image/9955149/>, and <http://www.fold3.com/image/9955150/>).

various engagements. He never mentioned serving in the rifle corps, but that service is proven and puts him at Still Water, as he claimed, for Burgoyne's capture. He served at another of his claimed battles, but could not have served in them all.

John's documented service, rather than "six years and six months," is nine and a half months. Historical context resolves a discrepancy between his colonel's certification alleging his 9 September 1777 discharge and Morgan's payroll where he was paid through 1 November.

PHASE THREE: RESEARCH MILITARY ASSOCIATES

Contextual research demonstrates that John's military experiences, the bonds he formed, and his disability were decisive in his life. Post war, his officers and comrades contributed to his decisions and activities.

Private John Temple is on record in June 1784 receiving his bounty land from Virginia. Like many veterans, he apparently sold the warrant. Impaired vision ill equipped him to cope with raw, uncleared land. Selling the warrant could fund some other opportunity—in John's case, a move with people who would provide him a safety net.

John surfaced thirty-four years later in Edgefield District, South Carolina, where other John Temples also resided.⁴⁰ In that interval, he never headed a census household.⁴¹ His location, however, during the hiatus can be teased out by following his wartime associates.

40. Two other John Temples resided in Edgefield. One appears on the Edgefield censuses of 1820 and 1830. See, 1820 U.S. census, Edgefield Dist., S. C., p. 44, John Temple; NARA microfilm M33, roll 118. Also, 1830 U. S. census, Edgefield Dist., S.C., p. 205, John Temples; NARA microfilm M19, roll 172. The other John Temple is a previously unidentified son of the Amherst veteran. For a disambiguation of the two Johns and evidence identifying the son of the Amherst veteran, see Rachal Mills Lennon, "Identifying an Anonymous Son: John Temple of Virginia, Georgia, South Carolina, and Alabama," [paper under contract to the NGS *Quarterly*]. The unconnected John Temple of Edgefield originated in North Carolina, son of another Revolutionary War veteran James Temple and his wife Rachel. For the unconnected John, see *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files*, roll 2356, James Temple, file R10451 and subsequent applications of his widow Rachel Temples and daughter Sarah Roberts. Also, 1820 U.S. census, Edgefield Dist., S.C., p. 44, John Temple. Also, 1830 U.S. census, Edgefield Dist., S.C., p. 205, John Temples.

41. 1790 and 1800 census returns for Georgia and Tennessee do not survive. The 1810 census (for which Georgia and Tennessee again do not survive) shows two John Temple heads of household in the South: one in Chatham Co., N.C., and one in Essex Co., Va. Both were too young (age 26–44) and lived quite different lives. See 1810 U.S. census, Chatham Co., N.C., p. 190 (verso), John Temple; NARA microfilm M252, roll 39. Also, 1810 U. S. census, Essex Co., Va., p. 167 (stamped), John Temple; NARA microfilm M252, roll 68.

Amherst tax rolls show that John, his lieutenant, and several comrades last appear in 1783.⁴² Edgefield records offer no evidence of a post-war cluster migration from Amherst to Edgefield; however, tracking John's military unit and its officers reveals a large group leaving Amherst after the war—for Georgia. John doesn't mention Georgia in his pension documents, but he was there.

Post-war Relocation

Post-war, a cluster of Amherst families took up land in the "Broad River Settlement" of Georgia's Wilkes County, particularly in the Goose Pond area. Several became prominent in Georgia history, including John's lieutenant, Benjamin Taliaferro, and Taliaferro's father-in-law, General David Merewether.⁴³

One year after rifleman John Temple dropped from Amherst records, he emerged in Wilkes County amid the Amherst cluster on Goose Pond. On 1 August 1785 he petitioned for the headright to which he was entitled as a single man over twenty-one. Upon receiving his warrant, he signed it over to Thomas Wooten—a wealthy planter whose land adjoined property of John's lieutenant, Benjamin Taliaferro, and Taliaferro's father-in-law, Merewether.⁴⁴

Over the next three years more documents connect Temple, Taliaferro, and Merewether. After going to Wilkes County about 1782

Taliaferro worked to recreate the traditional planter-elite status maintained by his Virginia ancestors. He operated a thriving tobacco plantation along the Broad River and in the process became one of the largest slaveholders in Wilkes County. Taliaferro's activities quickly gained him recognition as an influential member of the Goose Pond community. He used this status to build a network of support from family, Virginia acquaintances and upcountry leaders whom he had met while

42. By the next roll, 1785, they are gone and the 1787 roll sustains their absence. See Amherst Co., Va., land tax records, 1783, 1785, and 1787, author's line-by-line reading; LVA land tax microfilm roll 17.

43. Ebel, "Benjamin Taliaferro (1750–1821)," and Ebel, "Goose Pond," *New Georgia Encyclopedia* (<http://www.GeorgiaEncyclopedia.org>). The portion of Wilkes that contained the Goose Pond community settled by Amherst families and key to John's identity was cut away into Oglethorpe Co. in 1793. See Robert and George Watkins, *A Digest of the Laws of the State of Georgia . . . the Year 1798*. . . (Philadelphia: R. Aitken, 1800), 526.

44. *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org>) > Georgia, Headright and Bounty Land Records, 1783–1909 > Headright and bounty documents 1783–1909, Teas, Charles–Thigpin, Travis > images 50–52, folder "John Temple." Wooten's placement in the same small neighborhood as Taliaferro and Merewether is attested by all the surviving tax rolls of this era, beginning with Wilkes's first in 1785. For convenience, see the Taylor Foundation-funded transcripts by Frank Parker Hudson, *Wilkes County, Georgia: Tax Records, 1785–1805*, 2 vols. (Atlanta: privately printed, 1996), 1:89–90 (1785, Capt. Alexander's District, 42 landowners), 1:153–54 (1787, Capt. Pope's Dist., 70 landowners), and 1:485–87 (1793, Capt. Richard Wooten's Dist., 96 landowners). The 1793 list, compiled by Thomas Wooten's son, enumerates Thomas consecutive to David Merewether and says Taliaferro's 1090 acres adjoined "Merether and Wooten."

stationed in Augusta. Taliaferro's efforts garnered him legislative appointment . . . His coalition of Wilkes citizens elected him to the Georgia Assembly in 1786.⁴⁵

Council and executive records for the years Taliaferro served in the State Assembly, which met at nearby Augusta, include John Temple, otherwise unidentified in contemporary Georgia records:

22 March 1787 Treasury warrant no. 199, John Temple
£5.0.0 [illegible] his payment as messenger of Council.⁴⁶

31 May 1787 Treasury warrant no. 138, John Temple
£5.0.0 [illegible] his payment as messenger.⁴⁷

17 July 1787 Treasury warrant no. 169, John Temple
£10.0.0 [illegible] his payment as messenger.⁴⁸

17 July 1787 Received 17 July his honor the Governors draft on the Treasury for Ten Pounds in part of my Salary as Messenger to the Executive to be Charged Civil Establishment signed J. Meriwether for John Temple.⁴⁹

2 October 1787 Treasury warrant no. 202, John Temple
£5.0.0 [illegible] his payment as messenger.⁵⁰

22 October 1787 Treasury warrant no. 213, John Temple
£10.0.0 [illegible] his payment as messenger.⁵¹

14 November 1787 Treasury warrant no. 243, John Temple
£5.0.0 [illegible] his payment as messenger.⁵²

29 December 1787 Treasury warrant no. 257, John Temple
£8.3.8 [illegible] his payment as Council messenger.⁵³

45. Ebel, "Benjamin Taliaferro (1750–1821)." Taliaferro's military actions in Augusta, Georgia, came after John Temple's discharge from his unit.

46. "Account of Warrants Drawn by His Honor the Governor on the Treasury, 1788, Augusta [Georgia], examined [by] John Wreat," digital image, "Southeastern Native-American Documents," *Digital Library of Georgia* (<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/nativeamerican/jpg/tcc784a.jpg>), citing document TCC784, Telamon Culyer Collection, University of Georgia, Athens.

47. *Ibid.*

48. *Ibid.*

49. [Receipts for services of] Rich[ar]d Worsham, John Temple, Rob[er]t Dixon, [and] Ambros Gaines, 1787 July 17, digital image, "Southeastern Native-American Documents" *Digital Library of Georgia* (<http://dlg.galileo.usg.edu/nativeamerican/jpg/tcc764a.jpg>), citing document TCC764, Telamon Culyer Collection.

50. "Accounts of Warrants Drawn by His Honor the Governor on the Treasury, 1788."

51. *Ibid.*

52. *Ibid.*

53. *Ibid.*

4 February 1788 Payments on warrants, no. 16. Received 4 Feby 1788 His honor the Governor's Draft on the Treasury for five pounds in part for my Salary as Messenger Council to be charged Civil Establishment. Signed J. Merewether for John Temple.⁵⁴

28 February 1788 Payments on warrants, no. 60. Received 28 February 1788 His honor the Governor's draft in the Treasury for five pounds in part of my Salary as Messenger of Council to be Charged Civil Establishment. Signed John (x) Temple. Test. J. Merewether.⁵⁵

29 April 1788 In Council. Ordered that the Governor draw warrant on the Treasury in favor of John Temple for the sum of ten pounds in part of his salary as messenger of Council to be charged Civil Establishment.⁵⁶

29 April 1788 Payments on warrants, no. 29. Received 4 Feby 1788 His honor the Governor's Draft on the Treasury for ten pounds in part for my Salary as Messenger Council to be charged Civil Establishment. Signed J. Merewether for John Temple.⁵⁷

28 May 1788 In Council. "Whereas John Temple, Messenger and Doorkeeper to this Body has without leave absented himself from the Duties of his Office whereby great inconveniences have accrued. Ordered therefore that the said John Temple be and he is hereby no longer considered as Messenger and Doorkeeper to the same. And that Tuesday the 3^d day of June next be assigned to fill the Vacancy occasioned as aforesaid."⁵⁸

Treasury payments to John again point to the same associate cluster. Once John made his mark to accept the payment personally, with "J. Meriwether" as witness. Three times Meriwether signed for John—presumably taking his pay to him. "J. Meriwether" was Lt. James Meriwether, Benjamin Taliaferro's brother-in-law.⁵⁹

John's job as council doorkeeper and messenger between the council and the governor lasted less than a year, but it is significant. Such jobs were rare, and they were patronage jobs. Someone with political power secured it for John. He had two powerful government connections:

54. Georgia Treasury Dept., General Accounting Records, "Receipts for Payments on Executive Warrants, 1788," unnumbered microfilm images; microfilm 30/383, Georgia State Archives, Morrow.

55. Ibid.

56. Georgia Executive Dept., Council Minutes, 1788–90, part 2, 20 April 1788; Georgia State Archives.

57. Georgia Treasury Dept., "Receipts for Payments on Executive Warrants, 1788."

58. Georgia Executive Dept., Council Minutes, 1788–90, part 2, 28 May 1788.

59. *Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land Warrant Application Files*, roll 1171, James Meriwether, file R16407; digital images, *Fold3* (<http://www.fold3.com/image/24775403> and seventeen subsequent pages/images), especially image 24775514 (page 33), which identifies James's father as Gen. David Meriwether.

- Benjamin Taliaferro, John's former officer and a Goose Pond community leader, served in the State Assembly during John's tenure in Augusta.
- George Mathews, Taliaferro's former commander, led Amherst families to Wilkes County's Goose Pond and was the Georgia governor whom John served as messenger.

To become messenger and doorman John needed legislative approval. Taliaferro or the governor could have proposed him. The sinecure provided John with steady pay and respect. The £68 he received for eleven months on the job—roughly equivalent to \$9,960 today—was a coveted stipend in Georgia's struggling post-war economy.⁶⁰

In 1793 the Goose Pond region of Wilkes County was cut away into the new county of Oglethorpe. Five years later, one John "Temples" flitted in and out of the new county's records.

14 February 1798. William and wife Mary Ray [Wray] of Oglethorpe to John Temples of same, \$400: about 200 acres on Millstone Creek beginning on Hugh Eggars [or Ector] land . . . adjoining Malcom Curry . . . Henry Sorrow's line . . . James Wilson's line . . . then to beginning, as per plat dated 13 October 1785. Witness: William Smith, J.P.⁶¹

1798. Capt. Brookes tax district: John Temples: 200 acres Mill Creek, granted to Dru. Cade and adjoining David Weaver. No white or black polls.⁶²

1 August 1798. John Temples of Oglethorpe County to Joel Barnett of same, \$720: 200 acres on Millstone Creek, part of a tract granted Drury Cade on 19 April 1790, including that part of the tract where the said Temples now lives, beginning at Millstone Creek on Henry Sorrow land . . . crossing the creek . . . to Richard Wright's line . . . then to the beginning. Witnesses: William Smith, J.P. and Frances Meriwether.⁶³

60. Allen D. Candler, ed., *The Revolutionary Records of the State of Georgia*, 3 vols., *Journal of the House of Assembly from August 17, 1781 to February 26, 1784* (Atlanta: Franklin-Turner Co., 1908), 3:563. Also, John L. Hopkins, Clifford Anderson, and Joseph R. Lamar, *The Code of the State of Georgia: Adopted December 15th 1895* [summarizing extant laws since the constitution of 1787] (Atlanta: Foote and Davies, 1896), 58 and 104. Also, Eric Nye, "Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency," *University of Wyoming* (<http://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm>). No other John Temple has been placed in Georgia who could have been the governor's messenger at the time Taliaferro served in the Assembly. He should not be confused with a contemporary Georgian, Jones Temple.

61. Oglethorpe Co., Ga., Deed Book 8:371–72; Superior Court, Lexington, Ga.

62. Oglethorpe Co., Tax Digest, 1798, p. 26, entry 47, John Temples; digital image, University System of Georgia, *Georgia Archives* (cdm.georgiaarchives.org:2011/cdm/ref/collection/tax/id/825), image 27. John's paying no poll might be interpreted to mean that he was over age sixty—that being the maximum poll age in Georgia at the time. Georgia county courts, however, granted exemptions to many who were disabled or indigent. The Wilkes court minutes are incomplete for the period when John moved into the county and would have first been placed on the rolls.

63. Oglethorpe Co., Deed Book C: 354–55.

Millstone Creek lay near the juncture of the Broad and South Broad rivers, flowing into modern Oglethorpe. Here lived numerous planters who appear in the Goose Pond tax and militia district on the 1785–93 rolls of Wilkes County. The 1793 roll explicitly says this Drury Cade tract adjoined land of David Merewether—father-in-law of the Amherst-born Benjamin Taliaferro.⁶⁴ Moreover, on Christmas Eve 1793 Cade appeared at a local estate sale with Thomas Wooten, who had bought John Temple of Wilkes's 1785 headright.⁶⁵

From 1785 to 1798 John Temple of Georgia was part of the Amherst County, Virginia, migration to Wilkes's Goose Pond and Broad River settlement. His associates pivoted around Benjamin Taliaferro, the rifle unit officer who served with Amherst soldier John Temple.

John's absence from Georgia's tax rolls for fifteen years—when men his age were taxed—suggests a disability exemption. No other contemporary same-name, compatible-aged man appears as household head on Southern censuses of 1790, 1800, or 1810. That suggests the soldier lived in Georgia or Tennessee, the two Southern states where those returns are lost. Amherst John has not been found in Tennessee, but he can be placed in Georgia amid Amherst comrades.

FROM GEORGIA TO SOUTH CAROLINA

A gap remains between the 1798 document and John Temple's 1818 petition. Oglethorpe and Wilkes counties yield no later record of his presence.

According to his pension affidavit John had a grown son by 1830. Under Georgia's headright laws, at marriage John would have become eligible for another fifty acres—or another warrant if he did not care to farm. That son's birth would have qualified him for yet another fifty acres.⁶⁶ No such warrants are at Georgia's state land office.

John moved from Georgia's Broad River settlement to Edgefield County, South Carolina, just across the Savannah River from old Wilkes County and Augusta. There John had a low profile. He owned no land. No records appear recorded or indexed under his name. His 1818 petition states he lived at Sweetwater. From 1810 through 1825 he attended a handful of estate auctions, including one on 13 December 1810 when "John Temples Snr" and "John Temples Jnr" bought a horse and a saddle from the estate of Dionysius Oliver Sr.⁶⁷

64. Hudson, *Wilkes County, Georgia, Tax Records, 1785–1805*, 1:485.

65. Grace Gillam Davidson, *Early Records of Georgia: Wilkes County*, 2 vols. (1932–33; reprint, Greenville, S.C.: Southern Historical Press, 1968), 1:109, citing "Original Papers" [bonds, licenses, probate files, etc.]. Cade and Thomas Wooten are listed consecutively on the list of purchasers from David Bridges's estate.

66. Faris W. Cadle, in *Georgia Land Surveying History and Law* (Athens: Univ. of Ga. Press, 1991), 68 and 71, provides a sound discussion of Georgia's land grant process in this period.

67. Estate of Dionysius Oliver, estate sale, 13 December 1810; Edgefield County, S.C., Probate Box 22, pkg. 778; Probate Court, Edgefield. This document was located by reading, sheet by sheet, all surviving probate files for Edgefield prior to 1840.

Oliver: The Georgia-Carolina Connector

Dionysius Oliver, a Dinwiddie County Virginian, retired about 1800 to Edgefield, settling amid his well-established sons. For twenty-three years he had been a leading developer of Wilkes and Oglethorpe counties. He was a founder of Petersburg in Wilkes County just above Augusta.⁶⁸ On 26 August 1779 he served on the first Wilkes County jury.⁶⁹ In 1784 he posted bond to keep a ferry at the fork of the Broad and Savannah rivers, connecting Petersburg and Edgefield District.⁷⁰ He was also a close associate of Benjamin Taliaferro—so close that in 1796 both were co-executors of Dionysius’s brother John’s will.⁷¹

CONCLUSION

All evidence for John Temple’s identity is consistent. Through his battlefield lieutenant, Benjamin Taliaferro, rifleman John Temple, who drops from Amherst, Virginia, records after 1784, can be tracked to the Broad River–Goose Pond community of Wilkes County, Georgia. Temple who asked for headright land in Wilkes County in 1785, sold his warrant to Thomas Wooten, Benjamin Taliaferro’s Goose Pond neighbor. In 1798 Temple temporarily owned land in the Goose Pond community, then in Oglethorpe County. He had bought it from Drury Cade, a Goose Pond landowner and associate of Thomas Wooten. John Temple of Edgefield’s Sweetwater community last appeared there in 1810, buying personal property from Dionysius Oliver’s estate. Oliver was a Wilkes County developer whose brother in 1798 chose Taliaferro as his executor.

The records associated with pensioner John Temple were not only few in number but doubtful in fact. Taking those records at face value left a skewed view of John’s service and a hole in his life story, but much of that void is filled by placing him in the context of his military comrades.

Analyzing John Temple’s life underscores a valuable research principle: when records created by one man are few or contradictory, records created by others, about him or his associates, can yield rich rewards. The lives and experiences of silent Southerners of the frontier era can be reconstructed by dissecting each record, seeking what is not immediately visible, utilizing historical context, and extending study to all known associates.

68. Useful for this family are the Oliver Family Papers, ms64; Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library; University of Georgia, Athens. For a description of that collection, see that facility’s online catalog (<http://hmfa.libs.uga.edu/hmfa/view?docId=ead/ms64-ead.xml;query=&brand=default>). Wilkes Co.’s deed books D, AA, and CC, are rife with his sales of Petersburg lots, with references to his original plan for the town.

69. Davidson, *Early Records of Georgia: Wilkes County*, 2:2, providing abstracts from an unlabeled book she terms “Minutes of First Court.”

70. *Ibid.*, 2:245, citing “Original Papers.”

71. *FamilySearch > Georgia, Probate Records, 1742–1990 > Wilkes Co., Ga., > Wills 1791–1819 > vol. C – Vol. GG-HH > C:179–82, John Oliver, 11 July 1796 > images 172–74.*